

A Report on the Alumni from Kentucky's Public Postsecondary Institutions

Introduction

This past summer, Wilkerson and Associates, a research firm in Louisville, KY conducted a survey of undergraduate alumni from Kentucky's public postsecondary institutions. The purpose of the survey was to measure alumni satisfaction with postsecondary education and the extent of their civic and community involvement (civic engagement), both of which are part of Kentucky's Key Indicators of Progress toward Postsecondary Reform. The survey was conducted by phone and included 4,100 undergraduate alumni that graduated two to five years ago (in the classes of 1995-96 to 1998-99).

Alumni satisfaction with postsecondary education is measured to answer, in part, question four of the council's Key Indicators of Progress toward Postsecondary Reform - "Are we preparing Kentuckians for life and work?" As postsecondary education reform in Kentucky continues, we hope that graduates from our postsecondary education system become increasingly satisfied with their educational experience and feel they invested their time and money well.

The civic engagement of graduates is another measure for question four of the council's key indicators. Many studies have shown that increased educational attainment leads to more community involvement. College educated citizens vote, volunteer, and give to charity more often. We are interested in how graduates from Kentucky's postsecondary institutions are contributing to their communities.

Alumni Satisfaction with Postsecondary Education

Measures of alumni satisfaction are derived from several survey items that were combined to create following four indices:

1. Recommendation of their college to someone else pursuing a degree
2. Satisfaction with instruction and faculty
3. Satisfaction with academic and student services
4. Satisfaction with preparation for work

Attachment 1 displays the responses for each of the above indices (and the survey items used to measure them) for the public universities and two-year colleges. Attachment 2 shows the results by institution.

Systemwide, 61 percent of the alumni responded that they "definitely would" recommend their college to someone else pursuing a degree. Graduates from

the community and technical colleges were more likely to strongly recommend their college than graduates from the universities (69 percent compared to 56 percent).

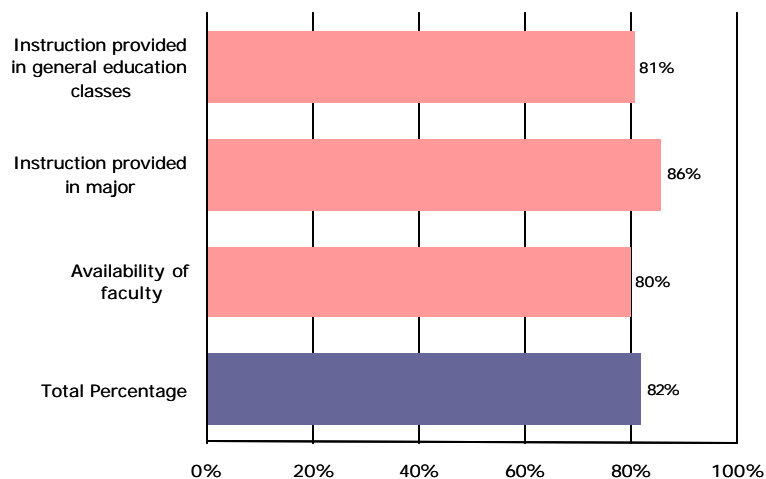
Three survey items were used to measure alumni satisfaction with instruction and faculty: 1) instruction provided in general education courses, 2) instruction provided in their major, and 3) availability of faculty.

Overall, 82 percent of the respondents were either satisfied or completely satisfied with the instruction and faculty at their institutions. Alumni expressed the most satisfaction with instruction provided in their major (86 percent were satisfied or completely satisfied) and the availability of faculty received the lowest rating (80 percent).

More graduates from the community and technical colleges were satisfied with the availability of faculty than from the universities (84 percent compared to 78 percent).

Satisfaction with Instruction and Faculty

Percentage "Satisfied" or "Completely Satisfied"



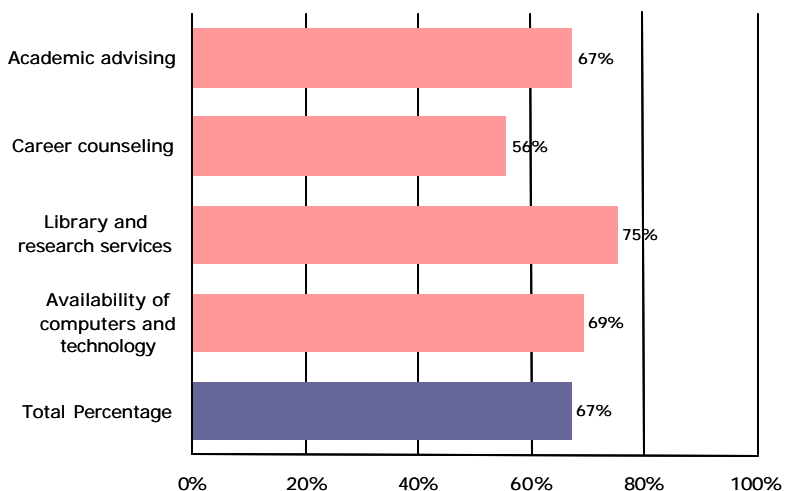
The survey items used to measure satisfaction with academic and student services were 1) academic advising, 2) career counseling, 3) library and research services, and 4)

availability of computers and technology.

Alumni were less satisfied with academic and student services. Overall, 67 percent were satisfied with academic and student services. Three-quarters of the alumni were satisfied with library and research services, while only 56

Satisfaction with Academic and Student Services

Percentage "Satisfied" or "Completely Satisfied"



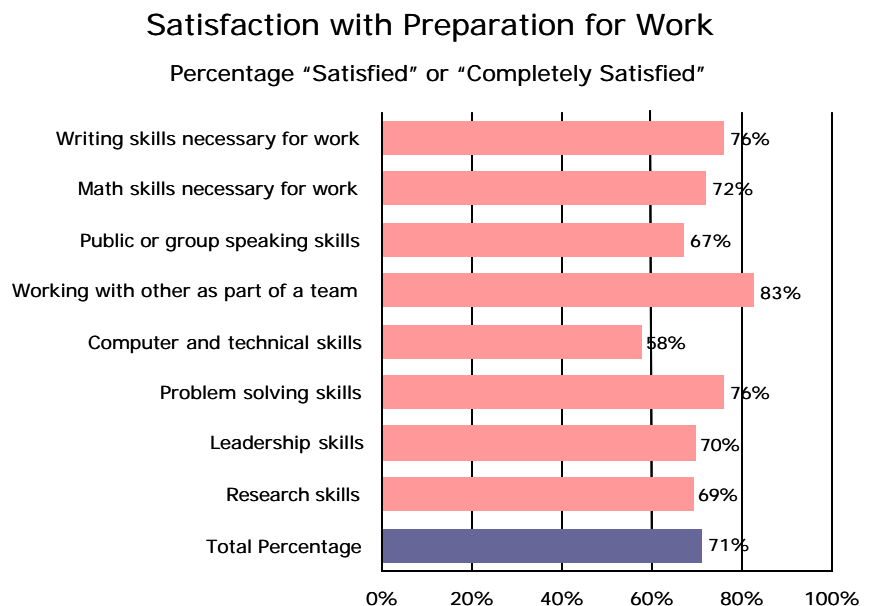
percent were satisfied with career counseling. Two-thirds (67 percent) of alumni were satisfied with academic advising and 69 percent were satisfied with the availability of computers and technology. Only half of the university alumni were satisfied with career counseling and 63 percent with academic advising.

The index for "preparation for work" was derived from alumni perceptions of the following measures:

1. Writing skills necessary for work
2. Math skills necessary for work
3. Public or group speaking skills
4. Working with others as part of a team
5. Computer and technical skills
6. Problem solving skills
7. Leadership skills
8. Research skills

Averaging all responses to these eight measures, 71 percent of the alumni were either satisfied or completely satisfied with how well their college prepared them for work. Alumni were most satisfied with their preparation for "working with others as part of a team" (83 percent) and least satisfied with the computer and technical skills they

gained from their college experience (only 58 percent were satisfied). Generally, there was less difference between university and community and technical college alumni in their assessment of preparation for work (overall satisfaction of 70 and 74 percent, respectively).



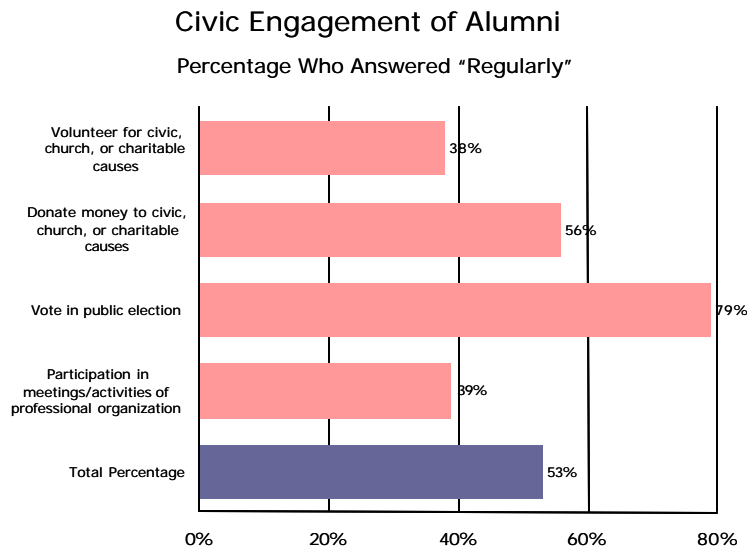
Civic Engagement

Four survey items were used to measure civic engagement. Respondents were asked how often they:

- Volunteered for civic, church, or charitable causes
- Donated money to civic, church, or charitable causes
- Voted in public elections
- Participated in meetings/activities of professional organizations

For each of these survey items, the respondents had four choices: never, rarely, sometimes, and regularly. The percentage of respondents who answered "regularly" ranged from 38 percent for "volunteering for civic, church, or charitable causes" to 79 percent for "voting in a public election". Thirty-nine percent regularly participated in meetings of a professional organization and 56

percent donated money to one or more of these causes. Given the relationship between higher levels of education and civic engagement, university graduates answered "regularly" more often than community and technical colleges on three of the four measures.



Additional Findings

While the primary purpose for the alumni survey was to measure satisfaction with postsecondary education and civic engagement, additional findings include:

- Since graduating, 43 percent of the alumni have either completed or are pursuing another degree or credential.
- Sixty-one percent were very interested in pursuing a degree or credential through the Kentucky Virtual University.
- Almost two-thirds (63 percent) are working in jobs directly related to their majors.
- Nine percent of the alumni started their own business venture or company.

Conclusion

The results of the survey are generally positive. The majority of alumni are satisfied with their postsecondary experience and how well it prepared them for work. They also are involved in community activities and vote at high rates. However, some findings suggest areas for improvement. The lowest ratings given by alumni from all postsecondary institutions were in the areas of

academic advising and career counseling, particularly at the universities. Because advising and counseling are important to retention, graduation, and successful transition to the workforce – issues central to Kentucky's reform efforts – institutions should formulate a response to these lower ratings. In cooperation with the postsecondary institutions, council staff will coordinate a symposium on best practices in counseling and advising. This event will be similar to the November 2000 Conference on Student Retention co-sponsored by Morehead State University and the Council on Postsecondary Education.

The results of this survey provide baseline data. Many of these alumni graduated before the passage of the Postsecondary Education Reform Act of 1997. The council will continue to measure improvements in alumni satisfaction and civic engagement as Kentucky's colleges and universities change in response to the goals of postsecondary reform.

Prepared by Patrick Kelly